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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the methodology used in an ongoing, independent evaluation of the teaching family model, also known as "Achievement Place," a community-based group home treatment program for predelinquent and delinquent adolescents aged 12-16. Youths referred by courts and other agencies live with surrogate parents, in groups of eight, for about nine months. The paper outlines evaluation procedures aimed at determining relative effectiveness of the teaching family program and comparison rehabilitation programs. There are seven graphs and charts summarizing the criteria used for the comparison (Author/JPB)

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Achievement Place: The Independent Evaluator's Perspective[1]

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This paper describes the current status of an ongoing, independent evaluation of the Teaching Family Model. The Teaching Family Model, also known as Achievement Place, is a community-based, group home treatment approach for predelinquent and delinquent adolescents (Phillips, Phillips, Fixsen, & Wolf, 1972). A brief description of the Model and its implementation throughout the country will provide the necessary background for discussion of the independent evaluation approach, some problems in evaluating the Teaching Family Model nationwide, and some preliminary descriptive data from the first year of field research.

Description of the Teaching Family Model

The focus of the evaluation project is the set of Teaching Family Model homes which are similar to the early Achievement Place homes in Kansas. The Teaching Family homes are community-based programs, drawing youths from the communities in which the homes operate. The youths reside in the homes and, in many instances, are assigned to the homes, either directly or indirectly, by the juvenile court system in the community. The youths participate in the residential group home program, but may attend local schools, go to their own churches, engage in various community activities, and visit their natural homes on weekends. The five to eight youths in each home are under the supervision of a married couple called teaching parents. The operation and management of the homes typically rests with the teaching parents, who also apply the treatment components of the Model. The homes are usually large, older residences which have been renovated to meet local codes for use as group homes. The teaching parents live in the residence 24 hours a day, typically with their own private quarters separate from the living facilities provided for the youths.

The treatment approach of the Teaching Family Model draws on components from various approaches that have been used with delinquent and predelinquent

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youths. While the early research literature on the Teaching Family Model focused heavily on the token economy component (e.g., Phillips, Phillips, Fixsen, & Wolf, 1971), this motivation system is only one of a number of treatment components. Frequent family conferences are group discussions focusing on behavior problems, management of the home, and other matters which concern the group. Individual counseling between teaching parents and youths occurs, and tutorial sessions are used to help youths in their scholastic activities. There are prescribed procedures for teaching youths new behaviors to replace inappropriate behaviors.

Teaching parents are trained in the Teaching Family Model via a set of workshops plus follow-up monitoring by trainers, resulting eventually in certification as teaching parents. The systematic training, monitoring, and evaluation procedures tend to produce a relatively homogeneous treatment approach in all programs staffed by trained teaching parents.

The youths remain with the program as long as necessary to complete the various stages of the treatment model and, barring premature departures, average around nine months' treatment time. Following treatment, youths are returned to their natural homes or some surrogate living arrangement. While teaching parents are responsible for implementing the youths' treatment programs, they work with local agency personnel to facilitate treatment activities. Each home applies a set of selection criteria for admitting youths, and while there is some variation from one community to another, these selection criteria are sufficiently similar so that the youths in different Teaching Family homes represent a fairly homogeneous sample of troubled youngsters.

While some homes have expanded the model to deal with populations such as retarded adults, emotionally disturbed younger children, etc., these kinds of clients usually are excluded by the homes' selection criteria. Generally, the youths in Teaching Family homes are delinquent or predelinquent youths, some are classified dependent/neglected by local community agencies, but all have run astray of local community norms and their behavior has brought them into contact with agencies ranging from social welfare departments to the police, probation, and juvenile court systems.

The Evaluation Project

The Evaluation Research Group (ERG) is funded for five years; the first was a planning year, the second, third, and fourth are data collection years, and the fifth year is for dissemination. At present, the third of the five years has just begun. In what follows, the evaluation approach for studying the Teaching Family Model and some preliminary descriptive data will be presented.

First, however, consider some rationales for conducting an independent evaluation of the Teaching Family Model. Few would deny the value of empirically demonstrating the effectiveness of any innovative delinquency treatment approach. But evaluations by program sponsors, no matter how impartially conducted, might be suspected by potential consumers since program people may find it difficult to maintain the unbiased perspective required for maximally objective research. Outside or independent evaluators should be better able to maintain a disinterested, impartial attitude

toward programs which are not of their own design. Thus, independent evaluations can lend credibility to program effectiveness claimed by program sponsors who conduct their own internal evaluation studies.

Regardless of how this independent evaluation of the Teaching Family Model turns out, the very fact that an outside appraisal was conducted will enhance the Model's stature as a viable treatment alternative to other community-based approaches which may be less adequately evaluated. In choosing among alternatives, community officials can be expected to select treatment models which have been evaluated over those that have not, even if unevaluated models seem more effective than thoroughly evaluated ones. Limited community resources will dictate placing confidence and money in a product about which something is known. The independent evaluation should insure that as much will be known about the effectiveness of the Teaching Family Model as will be known about its competitors.

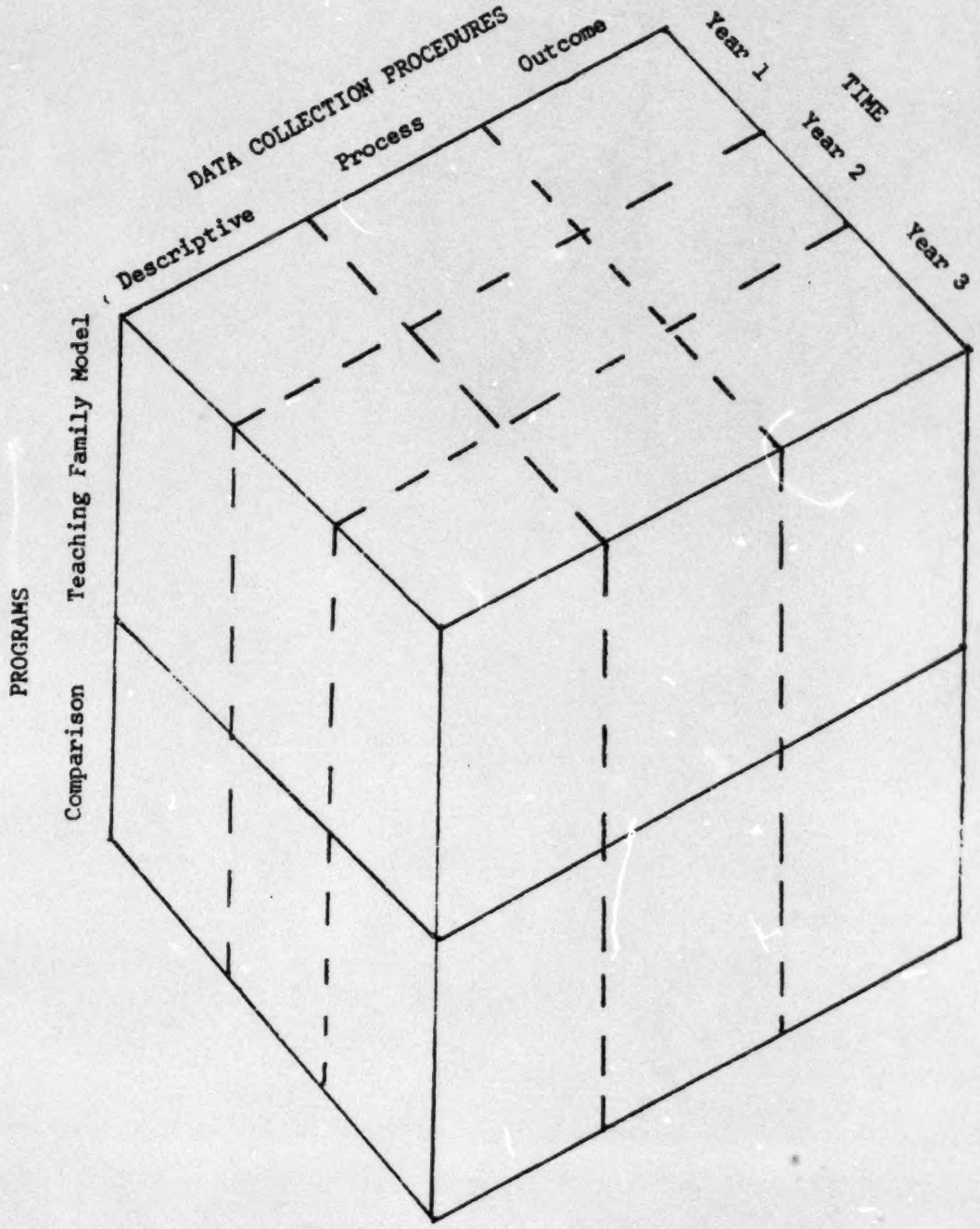
Evaluation paradigm. A three-dimensional evaluation paradigm is used to organize data collection activities and provide a general framework for data analysis. The three dimensions are programs, data collection procedures, and time. Figure 1 shows the evaluation model schematically: (a) programs are divided into two samples of Teaching Family programs and comparison programs (to be described below); (b) the 17 data collection procedures are classified into descriptive, process, and outcome kinds of measures; and (c) time is partitioned into the three data collection years. The paradigm's dimensions are fully crossed, meaning that each of the programs is assessed with each of the data collection procedures during each of the data collection years.

While the time dimension shows three data collection years, the actual administration schedules vary among the 17 data collection procedures. Some instruments are obtained annually, others more frequently, and others are tied to youths' progress through the program. Three years of data collection should be sufficient for adequate follow-up of youths, since most youngsters are in treatment for less than one year. Thus, youths who enter a treatment program during Year 1 of the evaluation project will have at least two years available for follow-up assessment. Similarly, youths who enter treatment in Year 2 of our evaluation project would be followed for at least one year. Working backwards in time for data collection procedures based on existing and accessible records (e.g., court and school data), the pre-program time for data collection goes as far back as the available records.

Programs are shown as the units of analysis in Figure 1. An alternative paradigm could show the units as either individual youths, program staff, or other respondents to questionnaires, interviews, tests, etc. But for most planned analyses, programs will comprise the units of analysis, and data obtained from individual youths, staff, or other persons in the field sites will be summarized to obtain measures which will apply to each individual program.

The following sections describe the programs, data collection procedures, and time dimensions in more detail. Also, discussion will focus on specific problems or issues that have occurred or may occur in performing the evaluation of the Teaching Family Model.

Figure 1. Three-dimensional Research Paradigm for Evaluating the Teaching Family Model.



Programs. The cooperation of 25 Teaching Family programs and 31 comparison programs operating in 10 states has been obtained. Teaching Family programs were selected to be close replications of the original Achievement Place home. Thus, the Teaching Family sample is comprised of homes which (a) serve delinquent or pre-delinquent youths, age approximately 12-16, (b) are community-based and operated by teaching parents trained, evaluated, and/or ceritifed by Teaching Family trainers, and (c) were willing to participate in our evaluation. Teaching Family homes were excluded if they served other client populations (e.g., retarded persons or younger emotionally disturbed youths) or were heavily committed to other research or evaluation activities. All of the Teaching Family homes which met the selection criteria for the evaluation agreed to participate when approached by the evaluation project staff. This 100% cooperation is unusual in evaluation work, and indicates the strong emphasis and interest by the Teaching Family Model on evaluation research. Teaching Family programs that have started up subsequent to the formation of the evaluation sample will not be included since sufficient follow-up time would not be available before the evaluation project ends.

The sample of comparison programs was recruited as follows. For each community or region from which a Teaching Family program was obtained, a list of possible comparison programs was solicited from community agencies. These lists comprised the available alternative programs that Teaching Family youths might have been placed in had the Teaching Family program not been available, excluding some kinds of non-comparable programs, e.g., probation or state institutions. In effect, we sought other community-based programs, typically group homes or some other kind of residential setting which served youths similar to those served by Teaching Family homes.

Evaluation project staff contacted the program staff or directors of the possible comparison programs, described the evaluation project, and after determining that a program was a suitable comparison, solicited their cooperation. In return for their participation, an evaluation report was offered which would be submitted to them, for their use only. Altogether, approximately 60 comparison programs were asked to participate and cooperation from 31 (50% acceptance) was obtained. Apparently, the offer of free evaluation in this age of accountability was sufficient inducement to enlist the cooperation from programs that otherwise had no reason to participate.

The 31 comparison programs are more heterogeneous on virtually all descriptive dimensions than the 26 Teaching Family programs. Some comparison programs, on the surface at least, appear similar to the Teaching Family programs, in that they use a behavioral treatment approach. In contrast, other comparison programs use non-behavioral treatment approaches, are slightly larger than the typical Teaching Family home, and use different staffing patterns. Several potential comparisons fit most of the evaluation project's criteria, but served youths from many different communities or states. Such programs were excluded from the comparison sample simply to minimize the cost of collecting court data from many counties rather than only one or two. Since contacting juvenile court judges and obtaining their cooperation is often time-consuming, the fewer different courts required in the evaluation, the more efficiently the work can proceed. Despite these practical considerations in selecting comparison programs, descriptive data reported below suggest that the sample is comparable to

the Teaching Family homes and will allow a satisfactory quasi-experimental study of the Teaching Family Model.

Data collection procedures. The second dimension of the evaluation paradigm involves the set of data collection procedures developed to measure a variety of descriptive, process, and outcome variables. Table 1 lists the 17 data collection procedures and a set of characteristics for each. This battery of evaluation instruments is rather comprehensive, yet seems suitable for efficient, large-scale field evaluation. If anything, it is too extensive in terms of the workload required of field staff. A priority order of these data collection procedures could be developed so that if the workload becomes a threat to continued cooperation, certain of the lower priority measures could be abandoned, either early or late in the evaluation project.

The 17 data collection procedures are classified into descriptive, process, or outcome kinds of assessments. Descriptive data are necessary in evaluation work to understand the salient characteristics of the programs being studied. This information is typically demographic, financial, administrative, or historical in nature, and provides the background against which other kinds of measures and findings can be interpreted. Process measures are concerned with implementation and execution of the treatment program. Often program evaluation focuses mainly, if not exclusively, on outcomes. Without adequate process and/or descriptive study, outcomes which may be interesting and important cannot be attributed to specific components or features of the treatment program (e.g., Levine, 1973). For instance, knowing simply that recidivism (an outcome measure) was reduced by a program is one thing, but knowing the program components that contributed most to that reduction is quite another. Process study is useful not only for interpreting outcome findings, but also for feedback to participating programs after the evaluation is completed, to help programs improve their treatment approaches (e.g., Stallings, 1975). In this way, program evaluation projects can contribute to the programs in exchange for the cooperation obtained during the evaluation.

Some issues in developing and implementing an extensive data collection battery are worth noting. Our assessment approach is multi-dimensional, i.e., different variables are measured using as many different instruments and respondents as feasible. A multi-dimensional approach is useful for obtaining convergence of findings across a variety of measures rather than relying on only one or a few measures of effectiveness. Of course, some evaluation measures are more important than others. For example, recidivism measures are a must in delinquency treatment evaluation studies, but other measures of program success should be included, as well, to either lend support to or be critical of primary outcome findings such as differences in recidivism. But with an elaborate data collection system come problems in maintaining the data collection system over several years. Since our target programs are scattered throughout 10 states and numerous communities within each of those states, project staff have to work long-distance. While staff travel extensively, they cannot be on-site at all times and must rely on data collectors hired by the evaluation project in the communities or on program staff for assistance with certain of the measurement activities. The use of program staff in data collection raises a potential bias problem, in that the data they collect could be influenced by their

Table 1

Characteristics of Data Collection Procedures Used in the Evaluation Research Group's (ERG) Study of the Teaching Family Model

Data collection procedure	A Kind	B Form	C Source	D Data collector	E Mode	F Schedule	G Unit(s) of analysis
1. PDQ - Program Description Questionnaire	Descriptive	Questionnaire	Treatment staff	ERG staff	Mail	Annually	Program
2. GHSQ - Group Home Staff Questionnaire	Descriptive	Questionnaire	Treatment staff	ERG staff	Mail	Once/staff person	Staff
3. POI - Program Objectives Instrument, Youth & General	Descriptive	Questionnaire	Treatment staff & program managers	ERG staff	Mail	At staff change or annually	Program & youth
4. PCI - Program Components Instrument	Descriptive & process	Questionnaire	Treatment staff & program managers	ERG staff	Mail	At staff change or annually	Program
5. COPES - Community Oriented Program Environment Scale	Descriptive & process	Inventory	Youth & treatment staff	ERG staff	In person	Annually	Program staff & youth
6. SAMS - Self-government & Motivation Systems (Questionnaire)	Descriptive & process	Questionnaire	Treatment staff & youth (T-P only)	ERG staff	Mail	Semi-annually	Staff and youth
7. AL - Activity Log	Descriptive & process	Behavior coding	Treatment staff	ERG staff	Mail	One week/month	Program
8. HCL - Home Contact Log	Descriptive & process	Behavior coding	Treatment staff	ERG staff	Mail	One week/month	Program
9. JIF - Judge Interview Form	Descriptive & outcome	Ratings	Community persons	ERG staff	Mail	Once/judge	Program
10. CAPI - Community Agency Person Interview	Descriptive & outcome	Structured interview	Community persons	ERG staff	Mail	Annually	Program
11. SPIF - School Person Interview Form	Descriptive & outcome	Structured interview	School persons	ERG staff	Mail	Annually	Program
12. TSCS - Tennessee Self-Concept Scale	Outcome	Inventory	Youths	Program & ERG staff	In person	Entry, 9 wk, 6 mo, & 12 mo. post	Youth and program
13. SHQ - Self-Report Questionnaire	Outcome	Questionnaire	Youths & treatment staff	Program & ERG staff	In person	Entry, 9 wk, 6 mo, & 12 mo. post.	Youth, staff, & program
14. FLT - Functional Literacy Test	Outcome	Test	Youths	Program staff	In person	Entry, 24 wks, 12 mo post.	Youth and program
15. SOFA - School, Occupational, & Family Adjustment	Outcome	Questionnaire	Youths	ERG staff	Mail	3 mo. & 9 mo post	Youth and program
16 SRD - School Record Data	Outcome	Record coding	School files	ERG & program staff	In person	Periodically	Youth and program
17. CRD - Court Record Data	Outcome	Record coding	Court files	ERG staff	In person	Periodically	Youth and program

status as program people. On the other hand, data often are more easily collected by program staff with less strain on the program than if special arrangements are necessary to allow evaluation staff to enter the sites for data collection.

The issue of bias, depending on who collects the data, was addressed in an early study this past year. We administered some youth instruments in two conditions--program staff vs. evaluation staff. A comparison of the average scores for youths who were administered the instruments by program vs. evaluation staff revealed no differences beyond those expected by chance. Hence, for youth self-report instruments like the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, it apparently makes no difference, on the average, whether program or evaluation staff collect the data.

A major problem in extensive evaluation data collection involves gaining access to individuals who must provide the data directly or allow access to data sources. The most time-consuming and often difficult data access problem involves juvenile courts. To cover the 57 programs in this study, access to 42 juvenile court systems in the 10 states was necessary. We have developed a general procedure for approaching juvenile courts to gain access to their records, but in the end it is the professional skills of evaluation staff that are most important in obtaining approval and consent from juvenile court judges to allow access to their records. We have approached all 42 juvenile courts, have been turned down by only one, and we are still trying to access that one.

Schools require a different approach and there are different problems in accessing their records. But school record data, like court record data, are critical outcome measures and must be accessed. Program staff, who often work closely with school personnel, will be relied on to assist in accessing school records. Accessing school data will begin in earnest this fall, so currently not much inside information on problems with accessing school data can be discussed. Preliminarily, however, it has been established that access to school records will be possible in most sites, and a data collection system to retrieve information on youths' attendance, grades, and disciplinary records has been developed.

Obtaining all kinds of data, particularly court and school records, requires strict adherence to procedures which respect individuals' rights to privacy. Informed consent is obtained from youths, parents, legal guardians, and all others who supply data for the study. Courts and schools often--and rightfully--request copies of signed consent forms before allowing access to records. Experience to date suggests that while obtaining participants' consent and gaining access to court or school records may be cumbersome and time consuming, these are not insurmountable obstacles to conducting this kind of field evaluation research.

The time dimension. The third dimension of the evaluation paradigm represents the longitudinal component of the project, involving extensive repeated measurement of programs and their participants over the three-year period. All of the 17 data collection procedures are used more than once during the three years and some at relatively frequent intervals, depending on youths' progress through the programs. A major issue involves maintaining cooperation over the three years, so methods of reinforcing program staff for their cooperation are important. Evaluation project staff are as open as possible about research activities, and a Bi-Monthly Synopsis of our activities is regularly distributed to all persons in the field, even those

remotely connected with our project.

Another problem in this longitudinal study has to do with the effects of staff turnover on the ongoing data collection activities. Group home staff turnover or "burn-out" is frequent, requiring training new staff in the evaluation approaches. New staff cannot be enlisted immediately in the evaluation activities because they have enough to do getting into their new jobs without being encumbered by an outside evaluation project. To facilitate the changeover in our data collection activities, departing staff often assist in the training of new staff. Group home programs, of course, are not static--they change in a variety of ways, often more frequently than either staff or evaluators would like, and program staff turnover is one of the most disruptive changes, not only programmatically, but from the evaluation standpoint as well. A major project policy is to minimize intrusiveness, since program matters must take precedence over independent research activities. Disruptions due to staff turnover will occasionally result in loss of data due to missed testing schedules. But these are the exigencies one encounters in field research and evaluators must develop a high tolerance, since there is often litte that can be done when programmatic disruptions interfere with evaluation activities.

Description of Teaching Family and Comparison Programs and the Issue of Equivalence in Pre-existing Groups

Evaluation requires comparison, which can come in various forms. A rudimentary kind of comparison is a simple, pre-post comparison to determine if pre-treatment measures change following treatment. This is a weak design unless another kind of comparison is included, i.e., a control or contrast treatment (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). True experimental design would require random assignment of treatment approaches to two or more samples of program units and random assignment of youths to two or more kinds of programs. In the present context, true experimental design would require random assignment of the Teaching Family Model and alternative treatment approaches to group home programs and random assignment of youths to programs, followed by evaluation to determine if the Teaching Family Model produced different outcomes from those produced by the alternative treatments. Such random assignment of treatment approaches and youths may guarantee equal pre-conditions in the two samples; that is, characteristics of the programs, other than treatment approach, would be randomly distributed in the two sets of programs, particularly if the samples are large. However, this true experimental design cannot be easily implemented in field evaluation studies. Hence, less ideal but more practical quasi-experimental designs are typical of natural field experiments such as the present independent evaluation of the Teaching Family Model.

The independent evaluation of the Teaching Family Model uses a design in which pre-existing programs with ongoing treatment approaches are compared. The opportunity to randomly assign treatment approaches and youths to programs simply did not exist. Since the Teaching Family and comparison programs existed intact before the evaluation began, and no attempt was made to manipulate their programs experimentally, other pre-existing differences between the two groups of programs could occur. And such pre-existing

differences could represent threats to the validity of outcome findings. For example, if Teaching Family programs served youths which were more severely disturbed than the comparison program youths, comparisons between youth outcome measures for the two samples of programs could be jeopardized. Thus, when field evaluation projects are unable to manipulate the assignment of treatment approaches to programs, or youths to programs, and must study pre-existing programs with whatever differences already exist between samples, it is vital to determine the extent to which the programs differ on variables relevant to outcome measures. If the selection of comparison programs in this evaluation project has generated a sample which is similar to Teaching Family programs in most or all respects except for expected treatment approach differences, then an ideal experimental design has been approximated and threats to the validity of outcome comparisons between Teaching Family and comparison programs should be minimized.

While selective sampling of comparison programs may be problemmatic for the validity and generalization of results, another matter in sampling comparison groups must be considered. Evaluation must be concerned with the fairness of comparisons between target programs which have prescribed characteristics, and comparison programs, however sampled. A sample of comparison programs without the same characteristics as the Teaching Family programs, excluding treatment approach, may provide an unfair comparison since different outcomes might be due to differences in the two samples of programs other than the different treatment approaches. For example, suppose Teaching Family homes were compared with institutional programs. Many characteristics relevant to outcomes, in addition to treatment approach, could exist, such as size, administrative structure, severity of youths' previous history, and so forth. One would expect institutions to be larger, with different administrative structures, and to work with more troubled youths than community-based group homes. Hence, it would be difficult to unequivocally interpret differential outcomes for youths served by Teaching Family and institutions if such differences in programs existed. Thus, unless comparison programs share all or many relevant characteristics with the target programs, except treatment approach, comparison of outcome findings could be equivocal.

These issues guided our choice of comparison programs, such that the Teaching Family homes and the comparison programs would be as similar as possible on most characteristics relevant to treatment outcomes, except for the treatment approaches used. In the following sections, the samples of Teaching Family and comparison programs are described on variables which, if the two samples differ, could interfere with comparisons on outcome variables. The data are taken from the Program Description Questionnaire, which contains information in four general categories: (a) Home and Community Characteristics; (b) Program Management and Administration; (c) Youth Information; and (d) Treatment Approaches.

The objective of these preliminary and descriptive data analyses is to establish the comparability of the Teaching Family and comparison programs. The question to be answered empirically is whether or not the two samples of programs differ greatly enough to invalidate outcome comparisons between the two samples. The data presented below are based on responses to the Program Description Questionnaire provided by staff in the complete sample of the 26 Teaching Family programs, but only 13 of the 31 comparison programs. To prepare this presentation, it was not possible to include as

many comparison programs in the analyses as will be possible later. However, preliminary as these data are, there seem to be enough programs in both samples to address the issue of pre-existing differences between the two samples of programs.

Home and community characteristics. Both Teaching Family and comparison programs are located in communities ranging in population from 5,000 or less to well over 100,000. The median population for both Teaching Family and comparisons is between 15,000 and 25,000 people. On the average, then, the programs in the two samples are operating in comparably-sized communities.

The local settings of the programs are described as urban, suburban, or rural neighborhoods. Six of the Teaching Family homes, or 23%, are in rural neighborhoods, while six of the comparisons, or 46%, are in rural neighborhoods, indicating a slight (but statistically non-significant) tendency for the comparison programs to be located in rural areas rather than urban or suburban neighborhoods.

The size of the programs is described by the number of youths that the program is licensed to accommodate. Here, the range is from four to 10-plus in both samples, and the median number of youths is eight for both Teaching Family and comparison programs. On the average, then, the two samples of programs serve the same numbers of youths, in terms of licensing.

Other descriptive characteristics of the programs and communities showed a similar absence of differences in the two samples. The physical facilities were comparable on items such as numbers of bedrooms, recreational facilities, staff office space, separate staff living quarters, access to recreational facilities in the community, and socio-economic status of the neighborhood. Thus, at this early stage in the evaluation, it is fair to conclude that the Teaching Family and comparison programs do not differ in any important respects with regard to their home or community characteristics.

Organizational and administrative structure. Table 2 shows the percentage of programs in the two samples which reported how financial matters and administrative policies are operationalized and by whom. Because the Teaching Family approach tends to place much of the program's financial and administrative responsibility on the teaching parents, the significant differences obtained for these two questions are expected. There was a clear trend toward greater involvement of treatment staff in financial and administrative matters in the Teaching Family programs. For example, teaching parents in 42% of the Teaching Family homes managed the financial matters, while none of the comparison program staff managed financial matters. In contrast, the board of directors has more financial involvement in the comparison programs (46%) than in the Teaching Family programs (12%). Similarly, the boards in the comparison programs are much more influential in determining administrative policies (85%) than in the Teaching Family programs (19%).

Another area of concern in operating community-based group homes involves the amount of outside influence on various aspects of the programs. Table 3 reports staff responses in the two samples regarding outside influences on treatment approach, administrative policies, personnel policies, and financial matters. The frequencies and percentages of programs reporting "Yes," "No," and "No response," in the two samples are shown in Table 3.

None of the four items produced statistically significant chi squares, so there is no evidence favoring one sample of programs over the other. Well over half of the programs in both samples indicated no outside influence on treatment approaches, administrative or personnel policies, and financial matters.

Table 2

Frequency and Percent of Teaching Family (TF) and Comparison (Comp.) Programs' Responses for Organizational Questions

	Who manages your home's financial matters?				Who determines your home's administrative policies?			
	T-F		Comp.		T-F		Comp.	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Treatment staff	11	42	0	0	6	24	0	0
2. Board of directors	3	12	6	46	5	19	11	85
3. Administrative staff	3	12	4	31	7	26	0	0
4. Local agency	2	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. (1) + (2) + (3)	7	26	3	23	8	31	2	15
Total	26	100	13	100	26	100	13	100

Note: Chi-squares for both questions were significant ($p < .01$) when eight response categories were used. These eight were reduced to the five shown to facilitate discussion.

Responsibility for selection of youths into programs could vary among programs. Table 4 shows that in both samples, about half report that a selection committee has the ultimate responsibility for youth selection, and better than 60% involve staff or program directors in youth selection. Boards of directors and chiefs of local social services have considerably less responsibility for youth selection than do selection committees and/or program staff. The absence of significant differences suggests comparability between the two samples of programs regarding responsibility for youth selection.

The next two items in Table 4, however, do show significant differences between the Teaching Family and comparison programs. First, we inquired about the extent to which the programs used volunteers. Thirty-eight percent of the Teaching Family programs reported, "Yes," while 77% of the comparisons did, a statistically significant finding ($\chi^2 = 6.3$; $p < .05$). This difference is expected, given the operating procedures of Teaching Family programs, where substantial responsibility for all aspects of the

Table 3

Frequency and Percent of Program Responses for the Question, "Are there any persons or organizations outside of your home's staff or board of directors that can directly influence any of the following?"

		T-F		Comp.	
		f	%	f	%
a) Treatment approach					
	Yes	8	31	5	38
	No	18	69	7	54
	No response	0	0	1	8
	Total	26	100	13	100
b) Administrative policies					
	Yes	6	23	1	8
	No	19	73	11	84
	No response	1	4	1	8
	Total	26	100	13	100
c) Personnel policies					
	Yes	5	19	1	8
	No	20	77	11	84
	No response	1	4	1	8
	Total	26	100	13	100
d) Financial matters					
	Yes	9	35	3	23
	No	17	65	9	69
	No response	0	0	1	8
	Total	26	100	13	100

Table 4

Responses for Teaching Family and Comparison Programs to Questions about Youth Selection, Use of Volunteers, and Evaluation

a) Which of the following has the ultimate responsibility for selection of youths into your program? (percentages, where more than one answer could apply)

	T-F	Comp.
1) Selection committee	58%	46%
2) Board of directors	19	8
3) Staff or program director	65	62
4) Chief of social services	15	23

b) Do you use volunteers in your program? ($\chi^2 = 6.3$; $p < .05$)

	T-F		Comp.	
	f	%	f	%
Yes	10	38	10	77
No	15	58	2	15
No response	1	4	1	8
Total	26	100	13	100

c) Is program evaluation included as part of your program? ($\chi^2 = 6.5$; $p < .05$)

	T-F		Comp.	
	f	%	f	%
Yes	26	100	10	77
No	0	0	2	15
No response	0	0	1	8
Total	26	100	13	100

program is given to the teaching parents. This is less true of the comparison programs and marks one important difference in the treatment approaches of the programs in the two samples. The third item in Table 4 also shows significant differences between the two samples. In answer to the question about program evaluation being included in their programs, 100% of the Teaching Family programs reported "Yes," while 77% of the comparison programs responded "Yes" ($\chi^2 = 6.5$; $p < .05$). While the samples differed significantly, programs in both samples place heavy emphasis on some form of internal program evaluation. Even in this age of accountability, this strong emphasis on program evaluation in these programs could account for the cooperation that this evaluation project has enjoyed in working with these programs.

Youth information. The two samples include programs with co-ed living arrangements, as well as boys only or girls only. Sixty-one percent (16 of 26) of the Teaching Family programs and 54% (seven of 13) of the comparison programs are boys only. Teaching Family programs are more likely to serve girls only than comparisons (27% Teaching Family and 8% comparisons). However, comparison programs are more often co-ed (38%) than Teaching Family (12%). These differences are not statistically significant, indicating comparability in numbers of programs dealing with boys only, girls only, or having co-ed arrangements. Also, the number of youths served by the programs is the same for both Teaching Family and comparison samples. At the time our Program Description Questionnaires were collected, the median number of youths in the two samples of programs was five.

The median age range for youths acceptable into the Teaching Family and comparison programs are also quite comparable. For the Teaching Family programs, the median minimum age is 11, and the median maximum age is 16. For the comparisons, the median minimum age is 11, and the median maximum is 17. Hence, there is only one year difference in the median age range for youths between the two samples--11 to 16 for Teaching Family and 11 to 17 for comparisons.

We inquired about the referral sources from which the programs had received youths. Table 5 lists the referral sources and the results for Teaching Family and comparison programs. Since more than one referral source could be checked, the percentages do not add to 100%. The differences in percentages between the two samples for each referral source are non-significant, although there are some trends worth noting. Somewhat higher percentages were reported for welfare referrals in the Teaching Family programs than the comparisons, 85% versus 54%, respectively. For an evaluation of delinquency treatment programs, it is important that the juvenile court referral source be comparable between the two samples. Very close percentages were obtained--85% Teaching Family and 92% comparison for juvenile court referrals. The other results in Table 5 do not show important differences, so it can be concluded that the referral sources for the two samples of programs are quite comparable.

In addition to referral sources, acceptance criteria for youths is an important potential difference between Teaching Family and comparison programs. We inquired whether programs would accept youths described in certain general ways. Table 6 lists the descriptors and the frequencies and percentages for the Teaching Family and comparison programs. None of the differences in percentages were statistically significant, but some

showed interesting trends. Teaching Family homes, for example, are more likely to accept adjudicated youths (92%) than are comparisons (77%). On the other hand, comparisons are more likely to accept violent offenders (62%) than are Teaching Family homes (42%). Despite these statistically non-significant differences in acceptance criteria, these trends suggest a tendency for the comparison programs to serve slightly more troubled youths than the Teaching Family programs. This possible difference between the two samples will be more thoroughly studied when court record data on youths become available.

Table 5

Percent of Programs for the Question, "Please check which of the following have ever referred youths to your home?"

	T-F	Comp.
a) Welfare	85%	54%
b) Juvenile Court	85	92
c) Ministers	0	3
d) Natural parents	9	7
e) Mental health	12	8
f) Other	7	4

Table 6

Percent of Programs that Accept Youths Described as Follows

	T-F	Comp.
a) Adjudicated	92%	77%
b) Violent offenders	42	62
c) Status offenders	100	85
d) Dependent/neglected	85	69
e) Non-adjudicated	54	77
f) Emotionally disturbed	85	69

Treatment approaches. The first section of data from the Program Description Questionnaire involves questions about (a) the theoretical orientations underlying treatment approaches, (b) the community-based character of the programs, and (c) the length of stay in program for youths.

Table 7 shows percentages of programs which assigned first ranks to the various treatment approaches. The behavioral or token economy treatment approach was ranked first by 80% of the Teaching Family homes. In contrast, 53% of the comparison programs ranked a behavioral or token economy approach first. Since the Teaching Family Model per se was not listed as a treatment

approach, it seems fair to assume that the Teaching Family programs ranked either the behavioral or token economy approaches to indicate the Teaching Family Model. The 53% first rankings for comparison programs is interesting and perhaps suggests an increasing prevalence of behavioral orientations in group homes generally. An eclectic approach was ranked first for 8% of the Teaching Family programs and 31% for the comparison programs. The eclectic label used in Table 7 identifies the "other" option provided for the question, where most respondents who ranked the "other" category first wrote in phrases such as "eclectic" or "combination of the above." Finally, reality therapy, humanistic, psychoanalytic, and guided group interaction were not prevalent first choices of treatment approach in either sample. No first rankings were obtained in either sample of programs for approaches identified in the questionnaire such as Gestalt, traditional casework, transactional analysis, Dreikursian, or Summerhill approach.

Table 7

Most Descriptive Treatment Approaches (Ranked First) for Teaching Family and Comparison Programs

Treatment approach	T-F		Comp.	
	f	%	f	%
Behavioral or token economy	21	80	7	53
Behavioral	11	42	2	15
Token economy	10	38	5	38
Eclectic	2	8	4	31
Reality therapy	0	0	1	8
Humanistic	2	8	0	0
Psychoanalytic	0	0	1	8
Guided group interaction	1	4	0	0
Totals	26	100	13	100

Note: No first rankings were obtained from either Teaching Family or comparison programs for Gestalt, traditional casework, transactional analysis, Dreikursian, or Summerhill approaches.

The findings in Table 7 suggest that the theoretical orientations underlying treatment approaches do not differ between the Teaching Family and comparison programs as much as one might have expected. Behavioral treatment orientations are clearly prevalent in these group homes, both for Teaching Family and for comparison programs as well. From the standpoint of evaluation research design, one might have hoped that fewer comparisons would rank behavioral approaches first, so that treatment approach differences between Teaching Family and comparison programs would be greater than they appear from the data in Table 7. However, when using pre-existing groups in field research, one must take things as they come. But the main

focus of the evaluation project is on the Teaching Family Model versus comparison programs, not on behavioral versus non-behavioral treatment approaches. And, of course, there are no Teaching Family Model programs in the comparison sample, even though some comparison programs may espouse a behavioral treatment orientation. In sum, we are confident that the comparison programs are sufficiently unlike the Teaching Family programs in treatment approach so that outcome differences, if any, between the two samples can be attributed to differences in the treatment approaches, i.e., Teaching Family programs versus non-Teaching Family programs.

The community-based characteristics of the programs also are relevant aspects of treatment approaches, particularly since the Teaching Family Model emphasizes community involvement, while other treatment programs may not to the same extent. Table 8 shows the results for three items concerned with youths' acceptability to the program, i.e., being able to attend public schools, to return home on weekends, and to have a natural home available in the community. The results show significant differences for each of the three items, suggesting that Teaching Family homes more often require that acceptable youths be able to attend public schools, go home on weekends, and have natural homes in the community than is required for the comparison programs. For example, 85% of the Teaching Family homes indicated that attendance at public schools was necessary for youths to be accepted into the program, while only 31% of the comparisons did so. Similarly, 69% of the Teaching Family homes considered going home on weekends a requirement for acceptable youths, while only 8% of the comparison programs did. Finally, Teaching Family programs more often required that the youth's natural home be in the same community, although only 31% of the Teaching Family programs indicated "Yes," compared to none of the comparison programs. The overall picture from these three items is that the Teaching Family Model, more than the comparisons, focuses on community access for youths with regard to schooling and their natural family situation. These findings fit with the Teaching Family treatment approach, which emphasizes these very points in its approach to helping youths from the community return to the community following treatment.

Finally, we inquired about youths' length of stay in the programs. The average length of stay for Teaching Family youths was about nine months ($\bar{N}$ = 21), while for comparisons it was eight months ($\bar{N}$ = 9). The average minimum stay in program was three months for Teaching Family programs and two months for comparison programs. And, the average maximum length of stay in program was 17 months for Teaching Family and 18 months for comparisons. None of these differences in average, minimum, or maximum length of stay was statistically significant between the two samples, indicating comparability between Teaching Family and comparison programs in youths' length of stay.

Conclusion

In sum, these preliminary Program Description Questionnaire results suggest satisfactory comparability between the Teaching Family and comparison programs. This comparability would seem to satisfy the evaluation

Table 8

Responses to Questions about Community-based Selection Criteria for Acceptable Youths

a) Acceptable youths must be able to:

	T-F		Comp.		
	f	%	f	%	
1) Attend public schools					
Yes	22	85	4	31	($\chi^2 = 11.8$; $p < .01$)
No	4	15	8	61	
No response	0	0	1	8	
Total	26	100	13	100	
2) Go home on weekends					
Yes	18	69	1	8	($\chi^2 = 13.9$; $p < .01$)
No	8	31	11	84	
No response	0	0	1	8	
Total	26	100	13	100	

b) Must youth's natural home be in the same community as your program?

Yes	8	31	0	0	($\chi^2 = 6.6$; $p < .05$)
No	18	69	12	92	
No response	0	0	1	8	
Total	26	100	13	100	

design requirement that the two samples of programs do not differ importantly on features of their programs which could influence outcome findings. The item differences which do exist, e.g., staff responsibility for financial and administrative matters, are expected since these questions tap information which characterizes the Teaching Family Model and may not characterize comparison programs. Further study of this comparability question will be pursued as more complete data are available, but from these preliminary results, it can be tentatively concluded that the two samples of programs should provide a fair comparison for evaluating the effectiveness of the Teaching Family Model.

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